

RESOURCE 2

Business Continuity: How to minimise impacts on core activities

Do you have a business continuity plan? Are volunteers included in this plan?

With COVID-19 expected to spread, you should prepare for how this pandemic will disrupt the operations of your volunteer-involving organisation. It is highly likely that volunteers will pull back and no longer be available to support your work.

To prepare, we strongly recommend that you create or update your business continuity plan. You can download a [Template from Business Tas here](#) . There are also specific resources from the Tasmanian Government on pandemic planning on [this website](#).

As part of this process you should clearly identify core and non-core business. You should also outline all the potential scenarios your organisation could face, from fear or confusion amongst your staff and volunteers, to consideration and a revision of how your organisation will need to work.

Here are some questions to consider:

- **Volunteers and Paid Staff:**
 - How can you best support your volunteers and paid staff and their families to stay safe?
 - Do you have volunteers and/ or paid staff who are vulnerable? What extra precautions do you need to take for their safety?
 - Have you communicated clear, accurate information to volunteers and paid staff on what your organisation's plans are and what actions they need to take?
 - Have you planned for a volunteer workforce shortage?
 - Do you have up to date records of which volunteers are and are not available?
 - What volunteer and paid staff support do you need to continue to deliver essential service delivery?
 - How can you keep volunteers and paid staff actively engaged if they are no longer working? How do you reduce any of their feelings of isolation?

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- **Operations:**
 - Do you have appropriate policies and procedures to protect your team? Are these well understood by all team members?
 - Do you have plans that can quickly be put into action if one of your team contracts COVID-19? How will you cope if all your staff and volunteers must self-isolate for 14 days?
 - What steps should you take to protect your vulnerable clients?
 - Do you have the necessary PPE (personal protective equipment)?
 - Do you need to put in place travel restrictions?
 - What will the impact be on your service delivery? What are your essential services that need to keep running? Can you cope with increased need for support from people who rely on your work?
 - Does your team need to work remotely? Do you have the collaborative tools, information and supplies to support this? Can you take steps now to test your remote working systems?
 - Does your team deliver critical transport services? Will you and if necessary, how will you continue to deliver these services without putting staff and clients at risk?
 - Have you informed all relevant parties about the changes you are implementing – e.g. volunteers, paid staff, clients receiving your services, funding agencies, program partners, the general public (if appropriate)?
 - How will you restore operations smoothly when the crisis has passed?

- **Events:**
 - Would the most responsible decision be to cancel or postpone your upcoming events?
 - Can your events be held virtually?

- **Financial:**
 - Can you budget for increased contingency costs over the next financial year?
 - How can you buffer any fall in income? How do you manage increased costs from suppliers?

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- **Social impact:**
 - Which of your services may ramp up during this time, such as support provided to people experiencing disadvantage who may be less equipped to prepare for self-isolation and/ or added hygiene needs due to a lack of disposable income for bulk food and supplies?
 - How can you show support to staff and community members who may be experiencing racism or discrimination due to COVID-19?

What do you need to tell your stakeholders?

We recommend you create internal and external communication plans to update and reassure your volunteers, paid staff, partners, funding agencies and the people you serve, **about your response**.

It's important to provide accurate information quickly, to minimise any spread of misinformation, misunderstanding or unnecessary worry.

Your communications should cover what steps people need to take to protect themselves, the precautions your organisation is taking to respond to the pandemic, the expected impact on staff, volunteers and your business. It is important to work with your funding agencies if you expect that COVID19 will impact on your contract deliverables.

It is also recommended that you provide the link to the [Tasmanian Public Health or other validated government websites](#) for further information.

As the pandemic unfolds you can tailor further communications as you collect feedback from your team about their concern, and as organisational decisions and government plans are made.

Stay informed:

We hope this has given you a starting point for planning your COVID-19 response. We encourage you to continue to follow health and safety guidelines as advised by appropriate and relevant authorities.

References + Credit: Thank you to Volunteering Queensland for their support in developing this resource & information gained from NCVO (The National Council for Voluntary Organisations).

Also see Volunteering Tasmania COVID-19

Resource 1- General Advice to VIOs, Resource 3 – Advice for Volunteers and Resource 4 – Stop the Spread

All resources available online:

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